Developing Critical Thinking through Cooperative Learning

Giedrė Klimovienė, Jūratė Urbonienė, Raminta Barzdžiukienė

Abstract. To think critically means to function effectively in the changing world of the 21st century. Thus, only conscious learning and reasonably active teaching with the focus on critical thinking skills might help a learner achieve positive results in any field, foreign languages included. The problem is that the basic intellectual standards essential to critical thinking are not typically taught in schools. Therefore young people at the university frequently display poor reasoning and problem-solving skills. This fact encouraged the authors of this study to analyse the development of critical thinking in university environment while teaching Business English (BE). The research methodology has been based on humanistic philosophy and cognitive theory related to a constructivism principle which recognizes teaching as an active process. The study presents both theoretical and practical considerations of the development of critical thinking. The focus is on Cooperative Learning (CL) activities that appeared to be effective techniques for developing critical thinking. The article analyses the most successful CL structures being applied in the foreign language classroom disclosing their content and effect on critical thinking skills. The classroom research carried out at the Lithuanian University of Agriculture confirms that CL creates favourable conditions for learners to become critical thinkers.